

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 FDRE-00 HEW-06 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 DHA-02 SCA-01 SCSE-00 EB-07

IO-11 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PASS-00 /053 W

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 427

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 1455

DEPT PLEASE PASS NIACT IMMEDIATE TO SECDEF, JCS, AND USCINCSO.
ROUTINE TO USUN NY, AND USMISSION GENEVA.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, GT

SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN EARTHQUAKE - WATER SUPPLY

AIDAC FOR AID/PHA/FDRC

REF: STATE 037637

1. THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE PROBLEMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR WATER ENGINEERING UNIT'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE POTABLE WATER TO GUATEMALA CITY AND RURAL AREAS STRICKEN BY THE EARTHQUAKE.

2. THE EARTHQUAKE OF FEBRUARY 4 AND THE LARGE AFTER SHOCK DESTROYED WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS IN BOTH RURAL AND URBAN AREAS. IN GUATEMALA CITY, BECAUSE WATER AND SEWAGE LINES PARALLEL EACH OTHER, SEEPAGE FROM BGGKEN SEWAGE LINES ENTERED INTO BROKEN WATER LINES. SOME WATER ENGINEERS HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT IN THE FIRST WEEK OF THE EARTHQUAKE, GUATEMALA CITY WAS SITTING ON A LARGE CESSPOOL. MOREOVER, GUATEMALA CITY'S ATLANTICO PUMPING STATION, WHICH BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE HAD PUMPED 10,000,000 GALLONS A DAY, AS REPORTED BY PLANT PERSONNEL, CEASED FUNCTIONING. IT IS NOW UP TO ABOUT

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4,000,000 GALLONS PER DAY. THIS STATION NORMALLY PROVIDES

THE CITY WITH ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF ITS WATER SUPPLY. COMPOUNDING DAMAGE TO THE PUMPING STATION WAS THE CONCERN THAT A LARGE OVERHANGING CLIFF ABOVE THE STATION MIGHT COLLAPSE. INSPECTION BY U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEER PERSONNEL AND DOD WATER SPECIALISTSSHOWED THE OVERHANG TO BE STABLE. MUNICIPAL WATER WORKERS HAD REFUSED TO RETURN TO THE PLANT BUT ARE WORKING NOW. THE ROAD WAY TO THE PLANT ITSELF, WHILE PASSABLE BY FOOT, WAS ALSO DAMAGED SO THAT LARGE VEHICLES COULD NOT PASS.

ALL IN ALL, IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT GUATEMALA CITY'S WATER SUPPLY WAS REDUCED TO 40 PERCENT OF ITS CAPACITY BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE. AVAILABLE WATER WAS AND IS UNPROTECTED. WATER WHICH IS CHLORINATED AT THE PUMPING SOURCE IS POLUTED WITHIN 200 FEET OF LEAVING THE SYSTEM DUE TO BROKEN DISTRIBUTION PIPES.

3. IN THE RURAL AREAS, PRE QUAKE WATER SUPPLY WAS SUPPLIED PRIMARILY FROM TWO SOURCES: GRAVITY FED LINES AND WELLS FROM WHICH WATER WAS PUMPED. IN THE HARD HIT RURAL AREAS, THE QUAKE EITHER BROKE THE GRAVITY FED LINES OR DISRUPTED THE MECHANICALLY POWERED WELLS. SANITATION CONDITIONS, WHICH WERE NOT PARTICULARLY SATISFACTORY BEFORE THE QUAKE, WERE SIGNIFICANTLY WORSENER BY THE QUAKE. THERE HAS BEEN GREAT CONCERN OVER WATER BORNE DISEASE. THE MASS MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE, A BREAKDOWN IN FAIRLY PRIMITIVE RURAL SANITATION SYSTEMS (SUCH AS DRAINS IN RURAL TOWNS BEING CLOGGED WITH DEBRIS FROM THE COLLAPSED HOUSES), AND THE INCREASED POTENTIAL FOR SICKNESS FOLLOWING THIS QUAKE HAVE MADE THE PROVISION OF POTABLE WATER IN RURAL AREAS A HIGH PRIORITY. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT IN CONTRAST TO GUATEMALA CITY, WHERE THE CAPITAL ITSELF DID HAVE SOME WATER, THERE WERE REMOTE RURAL AREAS WHICH WERE TOTALLY WITHOUT WATER.

4. AT THE OUTSET OF THE DISASTER, THE EMBASSY RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR PORTABLE WATER TANKS. THESE TANKS ARE APPROXIMATELY TWELVE FEET IN DIAMETER, FIVE FEET HIGH AND HAVE A CAPACITY OF 3,000 GALLONS. THEY COST APPROXIMATELY \$1200 EACH. TWELVE WATER TANKS WERE REQUESTED FROM FDRC; WHEN THESE TANKS ARRIVED THEY WERE TAKEN OVER BY THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY HAVE ONLY RECENTLY BEEN DEPLOYED. THERE UNCLASSIFIED

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IS SOME CONFUSION OVER THE CONDITION OF THESE TANKS ON ARRIVAL AND A CONSEQUENT NEED FOR REPAIRS. IN RETROSPECT, IT IS REGRETABLE THAT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WAS NOT AVAILABLE AT THE TIME THESE TANKS WERE TURNED OVER TO THE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE.

5. THE MISSION SOON REQUESTED THAT DOD SEND A WATER SPECIALIST WHO WAS PROMPTLY DISPATCHED. THIS SPECIALIST, CAPTAIN VIC WEHMAN, HAS OPERATED WITH A TEN MAN TEAM FROM

DOD; HIS EFFORTS HAVE BEEN SUPPLEMENTED BY THE CHIEF ENGINEER FROM ROCAP AND THREE OTHER ROCAP ENGINEERS. UPON ARRIVING, CPT. WEHMAN IMMEDIATELY BEGAN ORGANIZING ALL THE GOG AGENCIES WHICH WERE INVOLVED WITH WATER DISTRIBUTION AND SANITATION. THIS NEW AD HOC GUATEMALAN ENTITY WAS CALLED "GUAESA"; HOWEVER, IT WAS QUICKLY DETERMINED THAT ALL THESE AGENCIES WOULD NOT COOPERATE AND POOL THEIR RESOURCES UNTIL THE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA ISSUED A DECREE. THE DOD TEAM SOON REALIZED THAT A DECREE WOULD NOT BE PROPTLY ISSUED AND BEGAN WORKING WITH THE INDIVUAL GUATEMALAN ORGANIZATIONS IN AS EFFECTIVE A WAY AS POSSIBLE.

6. CAPTAIN WEHMAN BEGAN WITH HELP FROM THE GOG, ESPECIALLY INFOM ENGINEERS, TO SURVEY RURAL AND URBAN AREAS TO DETERMINE THOSE POINTS WHICH WERE MOST IN NEED OF POTABLE WATER. WITH THE COMPLETION OF THIS SURVEY, IT WAS DECIDED TO AIRLIFT 85 WATER RESERVOIRS FROM THE STATES. WHILE WATER RESERVOIRS ARE FAIRLY SIMPLE STRUCTURES, THERE WAS A CLEAR NEED TO TRAIN GUATEMALANS IN THE ERECTION OF THESE TANKS, MAINTENANCE (EACH TANK COMES WITH A REPAIR KIT) AND THE MONITORING OF THE CHLORINE CONTENT. THE DOD TEAM THUS BEGAN TO TRAIN 64 GOG MILITARY ACADEMY CADETS TO OPERATE THE TANKS OUTSIDE OF GUATEMALA CITY. IN GUATEMALA CITY, WE HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE GUATEMALA CITY MUNICIPAL FIRE DEPARTMENT.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 428

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 1455

DEPT PLEASE PASS NIACT IMMEDIATE TO SECDEF, JCS, AND USCINCSO.
ROUTINE TO USUN NY, AND USMISSION GENEVA.

AIDAC FOR AID/PHA/FDRC

7. IN THE CITY ITSELF, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND RESIDENTS WHO LIVE NEAR THE TANKS HAVE COOPERATED IN THE MAINTENANCE OF THESE TANKS. THE REASON MILITARY CADETS WERE NOT USED IN THE CITY IS BECAUSE OF JURISDICTIONAL CONCERNS: EVIDENTLY THE MILITARY AND THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS DO NOT WORK WELL TOGETHER. THE BASIC TRAINING INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING THESE TANKS IS THE OPERATION OF CHLORIN COMPARATOR KITS, A DEVICE USED TO MONITOR THE CHLORINE CONTENT OF THE WATER. THE FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS ALSO PROVIDED WITHIN THE CITY THE LOGISTICS NEEDED IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TANKS. WE HAVE ALSO DECIDED TO SUPPLEMENT THE CAPABILITY OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT BY ATTACHING TEMPORARILY TO THE DEPARTMENT THREE 1000 GALLON METAL ARMY POTABLE WATER TANKS WHICH WERE PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED TO THE 47TH ARMY FIELD HOSPITAL. THESE TANKS WILL BE USED TO FERRY WATER FROM A CENTRAL SUPPLY POINT TO THOSE RUBBER TANKS THAT CANNOT BE SUPPLIED FROM A CITY MAIN. PERHAPS ONE OF THE MORE IMAGINATIVE PROPOSALS UNDER CONSIDERATION, IS CONVERTING RUBBER WATER RESERVOIRS INTO TRUCK MOUNTED PORTABLE TANKS TO BE USED TO SUPPLY OTHER TANKS. AS YOU KNOW WE HAVE REQUESTED FDRC TO PROVIDE UNDRO ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS WITH 37 RUBBER WATER TANKS. THE PROPOSAL IS TO MOUNT SOME OF THESE WATER

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RESERVOIR(S) ON FLAT BED GOG TRUCKS TO FUNCTION AS MAKESHIFT PORTABLE WATER TRUCKS. WORKING WITH THE FIRE DEPARTMENT ARE FOUR TWO MAN ARMY WATER TEAMS WITH PEACE CORPS AND ROCAP ENGINEERS. THESE PERSONNEL ARE TRAINING PEOPLE TO MONITOR AND SUPPLY THE TANKS WHICH ARE IN PLACE. IDEALLY WE HOPE TO LOCATE AS MANY TANKS AS POSSIBLE NEAR REPAIRED WATER PIPES SO THAT WATER NEED NOT BE TRUCKED TO EACH TANK. THE ONLY PROBLEM THIS PRESENTS IS THAT WE WILL HAVE TO HAVE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF CHLORINE ON HAND TO KEEP EACH TANK CHLORINATED. IT HAS BEEN HEART WARMING TO NOTE HOW MUCH PRIDE THE GUATEMALANS WHO LIVE NEAR THE TANKS TAKE IN THEIR BEING ABLE TO MAINTAIN AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE TANKS. THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS HAS AGREED TO ASSIST IN BACTERIOLOGICAL SAMPLING OF THE WATER SUPPLY. THE EMBASSY WATER TEAM PERSONNEL ARE ALSO WORKING WITH EMPAGUA, THE CITY WATER UTILITY, TO ASSIST IN THE LOCATION OF FUNCTIONING WATER DISTRIBUTION LINES. ALL IN ALL, WE HAVE 24 WATER TANKS SET UP IN THE WESTERN, CENTRAL AND NORTHEAST PORTIONS OF GUATEMALA CITY.

8. IN THE RURAL AREAS, WE ARE ENCOUNTERING SOME PROBLEMS WITH CADETS SETTING UP THE TANKS AND FINDING LOCAL PERSONNEL TO MAINTAIN THEM. WE ARE PRESENTLY INVESTIGATING THIS SITUATION TO SEE IF IT IS SYMPTOMATIC OF WIDER ACCEPTANCE PROBLEMS.

THE TANKS IN THE RURAL AREAS HAVE NOT ONLY BEEN IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY TO SUPPLY POTABLE WATER BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY TO STORE THE OFTEN TIMES LIMITED SUPPLIES WHICH EXIST. THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS WHERE THE TANKS ARE THE PRIME IF NOT ONLY, SOURCE OF WATER. THE TANKS REACHED THE RURAL AREAS BY EITHER TRUCK, CHINOOK, OR HELICOPTER. PRESENTLY WE HAVE 64 TANKS SET UP IN THESE AREAS. 36 TANKS ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE HARDEST HIT AREA NORTH WEST OF GUATEMALA CITY. 28 TANKS ARE LOCATED TO THE NORTH EAST OF GUATEMALA CITY WHERE DESTRUCTION WASN'T AS AWESOME AS IT WAS TO THE WEST OF THE CITY BUT WHERE WATER SUPPLY HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED. THUS A TOTAL OF 88 TANKS ARE NOW IN PLACE.

9. COMMENT: ALL IN ALL THE TANKS HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR RELIEF EFFORT. 700,000 PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS AND 600,000 IN GUATEMALA CITY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY LACK OF

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OR A DRAMATICALLY REDUCED SUPPLY OF WATER. IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, THERE WILL CONTINUE TO BE A NEED FOR POTABLE WATER. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REACHED BY THESE TANKS, BUT THE NUMBER IS CONSIDERABLE. WE HAVE HOWEVER, SOME CONCERNS OVER THE FUTURE OF THE WATER TANKS. AT THIS TIME, IT IS HARD TO SAY HOW LONG THE TANKS WILL BE NEEDED. ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 2 MONTHS IN SOME AREAS TO A YEAR IN OTHER AREAS. BECAUSE OF THE NEED FOR THE TANKS BY THE PEOPLE, WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN, BE CAREFULLY MAINTAINED.

WHAT IS OF CONCERN TO US IS WHAT HAPPENS ONCE ALTERNATE SOURCES OF WATER ARE FOUND THROUGH REPAIRED DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS, WELLS, ETC. WE HOPE THE TANKS WILL BE COLLECTED BY THE GOV AND KEPT WELL MAINTAINED IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER DISASTER REQUIRING THEIR USE BY EITHER THE GOV OR ANOTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY.

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